

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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April 8, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: Al Haig

SUBJECT: General Abrams' and JCS Views on Vietnamization

Attached at Tab A, after an inconceivable delay, is a memorandum from Secretary Laird conveying a memorandum from General Wheeler which encloses a battlefield assessment from General Abrams. The assessment reviews the situation in each Corps area which I have read very carefully. I am impressed with it if for no other reason than it parallels closely my own assessment as a result of 11 days in the field in Vietnam.

While it is a lengthy message, I would suggest that you read it in its entirety as the most accurate single document available on the military situation in Vietnam as of the last days of the third tranche. As I told you earlier, General Abrams had strongly recommended, in conjunction with this assessment, that decision on further troop withdrawals be delayed for a period of 90 days.

The significant aspect of General Abrams' analysis, in addition to the accurate assessment of the situation on the ground, is the fact that FY 71 budget cuts will impose a 30% degradation in air support per allied maneuver battalion even if combat activities remain at the lowest level experienced in the last two years. At the median level, which will surely rise as a result of the activity of the past weeks, the proposed FY 71 air support would be 30% below that required. This percentage reduction in air support is linked to support per combat battalion and is not affected by the overall force reductions which have already taken place.

A second, equally significant factor, is the drop of B-52 sorties in and out of country from the median level activity of 1776 sorties per month to a FY 71 funded level of 1200 sorties per month. When these arbitrary reductions are considered in the light of the situation in Laos

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and the potential situation in Cambodia, it is quite obvious that our residual forces in Vietnam are being increasingly deprived of what heretofore has been considered essential air support.

The final, 'and perhaps most significant factor, is General Abrams' point that the recent effectiveness of his activity has been largely the result of utilizing B-52s as his strategic reserve. As ground forces have been drawn down and at a point when ARVN strategic reserves have been moved into a permanently committed posture, it is apparent that B-52 sortie rates have also been drastically reduced.

At Tab B is a subsequent memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff in which they recommend that redeployments be held in abeyance pending further assessment over the next 75 days and thus favor that the next redeployment announcement be deferred until June 15th. The JCS analysis generally corresponds to that of General Abrams although I suspect it is somewhat more parochialized by conflicting service interests and Pentagon compromises.

As you know, these papers came to your attention only because they surfaced in the newspaper. I believe it would be necessary to have both briefed and forwarded to the President before the meeting on the next troop withdrawal. Unquestionably, they are going to come as a psychological blow to the President who probably hopes that things in Vietnam are on a much sounder footing. My fear is that sometime over the next three or four months this whole issue is going to blow in a way in which the President and the entire Pentagon will be required to give an accounting to the Congress on just what has occurred and who recommended what.

For this reason, I suggest that we have a careful analysis of each report prepared and forwarded over your signature to the President to insure that the history books do not put you in a position of shielding what has already been an inexcusable omission on the part of Secretary Laird.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

Attachments

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